

THE QL REPORT

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Happy Holidays to all of you out there. It's hard to believe this issue marks the end of almost two full years of publishing the QL. The January issue will mark the beginning of our third year as the oldest QL periodical in the States. We thank all of you for subscribing and hope you to continue to do so throughout the coming year.

We were in Las Vegas attending COMDEX, the huge computer show held there every year. Over 100,000 people attended, making it the largest computer show in the world. Unfortunately the QL was not there but we kept bumping into "QL people" so to speak. Andy Pennell was there, who wrote The QDOS Companion. Hisoft was there, as was Metacomco. These last two companies were exhibiting in the Atari booth. Hisoft's ST titles have been receiving high praise from Webster in BYTE magazine. It's at least nice to see that starting with a QL definitely leads to bigger and better things and we hope this is how you view your association with the QL.

As we have said before, the Atari ST really has nothing on the QL except for a much better marketing effort, something Sinclair never had. The four Psion programs, especially since they come with the QL, are much better than most of the business programs out now on the ST.

In other news, Sir Clive Sinclair (remember him?) now has two new companies since selling QL and Spectrum rights to Amstrad back in April of this year. The first, Anamantic, is concerned with wafer scale integration which we have reported on in earlier editions of the Report. The second company is called Moduliser and is working on Pandora, Sinclair's portable computer. Based in Cambridge, Sir Clive retained the rights to this project after the sell-off to Amstrad.

Pandora will not, as had been widely reported earlier, be Spectrum compatible. Instead, it will run CP/M. The display will no longer utilise his flat screen technology but will rely on conventional LED display. Sinclair hopes to launch the portable sometime early next year.

It is rather ironic that one reason Sinclair was forced to sell out to Amstrad was due to SRL's quality control(or lack of it) which was affecting sales. We hear now that Amstrad's new version of the Spectrum, the 128+2, has been withdrawn from the shelves of Boots, one of the larger U.K. retailers due to a reported 40% return-defective rate.

For those of you who have I.C.E. but wish you could also run Tony Tebby's Toolkit II which is also a ROM cartridge, good news. We now have Tony's SUPER TOOLKIT on microdrive cartridge as well as ROM cartridge. The microdrive version is supplied in a configurable form so that parts of the Toolkit may be left out if they are not required. The full Toolkit occupies about 16k bytes, a minimum useful Toolkit occupies about 1k bytes.

We have just received ICICLE from Eidersoft, their new front-end icon-based software for the Psion programs (and others). Written by Barry Ashfield of Psientific, it looks excellent. We will have more information on the package next month. What the program does is allow you to create icons for use from within programs (including the Psion ones) IF you have I.C.E. or the MICE system. If you have version 1.8 or earlier of I.C.E., ICICLE will not work. We are going to see if we can get updated ROMS from Eidersoft and will keep you posted.

The one part of ICICLE we have used is an option which allows you to incorporate icons into QLWP. By altering the QLWP BOOT program and transferring the QUILL_ICICLE task to your QLWP backup cartridge (or disk), you will be able to see how functional ICICLE is. Remember when changing the BOOT program to substitute QLWP for QUILL. When you boot up your word processing program, you will see a title screen for ICICLE briefly and then your normal QLWP screen with F1 for help, F3 for commands, etc. will appear.

All looks normal until you either click the right button on your mouse or type CONTROL and <Z>. Then the ICICLE menu appears in a window. You then have full pointer control to go to whichever page you want, get a directory from mdv, flp, or ram, go to the top or bottom of the document, load, save, or use a spool facility. You also can ZAP your document, format, search and replace, etc. Up to 54 commands or text or whatever can be set up. In addition, there are pre-designed icons for date, address, paragraph 1,2, etc., print to printer, print to lis file, and a few other features. All of these icons as we said are pre-designed but, ICICLE allows you to create them yourself. Not only to design the icon but also to specify what text or command, etc. you want to appear or happen when you click the appropriate icon.

For example, when you click the date icon from within QLWP, the current date will be written into your document. If you click address, whatever the pre-defined address that you put into that particular icon is, will be written into your document. As we said earlier, we will be experimenting with ICICLE and keep you posted with more information on this fine program next month.

DIRECTORY INTO MEMORY

=====by Marshall Stiles =====

I have seen a number of programs using a microdrive file containing a directory listing. The problem is copying, deleting, etc. as using the file means that the file must be accessed for each task and slows operations down to a crawl. Utilizing the following listing of PROCedure's can allow you to write utilities in SuperBASIC for directory displays, various copy schemes, etc. I have written a partial emulation of MS-DOS commands for copying files from one drive to another without having to put in extra keystrokes deleting files and to perform backups of files with similar extensions and so on. If you delete line 130 and write a PROCedure like- 1000 DEFine PROCedure m2:drive\$="mdv2_":END DEFine m2, and likewise for mdv1_, you have created a means for default drive switching. The sample PROCedures I have in the listing are called by typing dm, initially, and then dp as direct commands. Make sure you have a cartridge in the drive for best results! Once dm has executed you can type dp to your heart's content until you feel the need to check the drive for any changes by typing

dm or dm:dp. There is no need to run the program at all. Just use the commands dm and dp after loading. To use this type of thing or any extensions you may add to it with other programs you will want to renumber to high or very low numbers. Look over the listing and remember that this is just the start of possibilities, not an end in itself...

```

100 REMark ID: directory_procedures, 1986, Marshall Stiles
120 DEFine PROCedure dm : REMark directory into memory
130  drive$="mdv1_"
140  OPEN_NEW #4,drive$&"directory"
150  DIR #4,drive$
160  CLOSE #4
170  OPEN_IN #4,drive$&"directory"
180  entry_cnt=0 : REMark get a count of files
190  REPEAT loop1
200    INPUT #4,entry$
210    entry_cnt=entry_cnt+1
220    IF EOF(#4) THEN EXIT loop1
230  END REPEAT loop1
240  CLOSE #4
250  DIM d1$(entry_cnt,18) : REMark store directory in memory
260  OPEN_IN #4,drive$&"directory"
270  cnt1=1
280  REPEAT loop2
290    INPUT #4,entry$
300    IF entry$<>"directory"
310      cnt1=cnt1+1
320      d1$(cnt1)=entry$
330    END IF
340    IF EOF(#4) THEN EXIT loop2
350  END REPEAT loop2
360  CLOSE #4
370  DELETE drive$&"directory" : REMark get rid of temporary file
380 END DEFine dm
560 DEFine PROCedure dp : REMark display directory paused
570  sc=0
580  FOR i=1 TO cnt1
590    sc=sc+1
600    IF sc=20 THEN
610      PRINT TO 12:"Press a key to continue..."
620      k$=INKEY$:IF k$="" THEN GO TO 620
630      sc=0
640    END IF
650    IF i>3
660      PRINT d1$(i)
670    ELSE
680      PRINT TO 12; d1$(i)
690    END IF
700  END FOR i
710  PRINT TO 12; cnt1-3;" files..."
720 END DEFine dp
//

```

Mr. D.E. Sullivan of the U.K. has an interesting way to attempt to recover lost ARCHIVE files(something most of us have tried to do at one time or another). He writes:

"Having laboriously created a book catalogue using QL ARCHIVE, my son then lost it all when the machine was switched off while the file was still open. All subsequent attempts to read the file resulted in the message, 'Wrong File Type'. He was understandably dismayed at the prospect of having to type it all back in again...

I therefore decided to look at how ARCHIVE's files are constructed. By copying a good ARCHIVE file to the screen it became apparent that the first 10 bytes are composed of a 2 byte control field followed by a label of the form 'vrmifbf0'. On the corrupted file, the 3rd byte had been replaced by a null character(hex 00). In the hope that this was the only difference between the good and bad file, I used the following program to read the file into memory, POKE a 'v' back into the 3rd byte, and write the file back out again to a spare formatted cartridge. I then re-booted ARCHIVE, crossed my fingers and loaded what proved to be a perfectly useable file once more. I had had no idea how much space to reserve and the 20000 was therefore very much a wild guess (on the assumption that an excess would not matter). A quick scan of selected records including the first and last on the file showed that it was complete.

```
100 LET n=RESPR(20000)
110 REMark load corrupted dbf as a stream of bytes:-
120 LBYTES mdv1_filename_dbf,n
130 POKE n+2, CODE('v'):REMARK overwrite corrupted 3rd byte
140 SBYTES mdv2_filename_dbf,n,20000
```

It may be necessary to experiment with the space to be reserved, but other users of ARCHIVE may well feel it is better than losing an entire file. (in my son's case, he had not yet got around to creating a back-up version of his file!). "

We want to remind you that in our opinion, the Psion version 2.3's might be worthwhile if they were offered as a free upgrade, but offered as we have heard at a price of \$9.95 each we feel is excessive. ARCHIVE still has a bug in the index file so you cannot increase the number of records you have with your version 2.1 by buying the version 2.3. EASEL does have a few new printer drivers, including ones for color printers and might be a worthwhile purchase if you have such a printer. The other two programs really offer nothing new that justifies paying for the updated programs.

We have past issues of SINCLAIR QL WORLD going back to September and still have a few August issues left. We also have plenty of back issues of SINCLAIR USER and YOUR COMPUTER. If you have not tried either of the last two, we are offering either SINCLAIR USER or YOUR COMPUTER at the price of \$2.50 each when ordered with at least one QL WORLD so you can see what they are like. Offer limited to one copy of each at that price (our choice of which month) when purchased with at least one QLW.

We are beginning to get in QL parts. We have membranes, ZX8301 and ZX8302 chips. We also have microdrive rollers, microdrive switches, and microdrive motors. Plus the HAL chip(16L8CN), the Ferranti ULA(2G007E5), and an assortment of other parts including ZTX551's, ZTX

313's, and 2TX 510's. We can send you a complete list of parts but many items will not have prices yet. For reference purposes you may want to keep it so you know what is available. We will be adding parts as the need dictates. If we do not have something in stock, it will take approximately 3-4 weeks to get it in. Next month we will have a detailed report on the workings of the QL. It will be a "mini" service manual which should help a lot of understand how to do a limited amount of work on your own QL. The 78S05 chip which we mentioned last month we have on order and should be here shortly.

We do want to emphasize that any work undertaken on your QL while under warranty will void that warranty. Any parts purchased from Curry Computer will be replaced if proven defective. We cannot and will not be responsible for any damage to your computer due to negligence or improper installation of materials. With the Service Manual and a little caution, you should be able to fix most problems on your own. If it's still under warranty, let your dealer worry about it (or A Plus).

R & D Technology of Tucson (Rich Moldovan) now has QLTERM version 2.0 available. This is a highly modified version of the first terminal program that was released into the public domain several months ago. It can support baud rates of up to 2400 with no loss of characters, and has 'auto-dialing' when connected to a HAYES compatible modem. It has full text file send and capture along with xmodem transfers for error free sending and receiving of both basic and machine code programs. It is also fully multi-tasking under Qdos. This means it is possible to run other programs while the terminal program is sending or receiving files (It has successfully sent a 60K file to another system at 2400 baud while trying to 'high score' missile command). The program is available for \$19.95 and will run on an un-expanded QL. It fully supports and will run from either microdrives or floppys. The cost of QLTERM is \$19.95 and is available from us or from Rich. Richard Moldovan, 7414 E. Curnavaca Pl., Tucson AZ 85710

We are going to end this issue of QLR with the results from our Reader Survey which was in our October issue. We hope you will find the results interesting. We want to thank all of you who took the trouble to fill out the form and return it to us. We were slightly disappointed that more of you did not return the survey but we did get enough of a response to form some opinions on the QL market here in the States and in Canada. If demand dictates, we will do another survey next year.

To begin with, 20% of QLR readers returned the survey to us. As we stated earlier, we were hoping for a larger response to more adequately determine what your needs were. There is always the possibility that a significant per centage of QLR readers no longer use their QL's but we hope this is not the case.

Geographically, the largest per centage of QL owners is situated in the Eastern U.S. with 31% of the total, followed by the South(22%), West(16%), and Mid-West(13%). Canada and the Southwest each had 9% of the total.

Regarding age of owner, 73% were in the 30-50 category, 20% in the over 50(including a few gentlemen over 80!), and only 7% were in the 18-30 category. We did not get responses from anyone under 18 who

owned a QL. All of the respondents were male. We did not receive a questionnaire back from any women.

Not surprisingly, all owners had JSU ROM QL's except for one who had an AH and one who had a JS. Also coming as no surprise is the fact that over 34% of respondents have had their machines replaced due to defects of one form or another. 20% have had their QL replaced once, 11% twice, one person has had it replaced three times, and one persevering soul has had his machine replaced four times! As to the reasons for their replacement, 42% was due to video/freeze-up, 26% for voltage regulator, 16% due to microdrive two, and 16% was for various reasons including keyboards, microdrive one, etc.

Most respondents bought their QL from dealers(60%) while the remaining 40% bought from American Express or Sinclair Research direct. Out of the dealer total, the majority bought from only three or four different dealers. Foundation Systems had 9% of the dealer total, a significant percentage, which shows that large ads do pay off. It also should show you the customer that the size of an ad is not in any way connected to the "size" of a dealer's reliability.

Only 42% have unexpanded machines. 58% have extra memory and of those, 83% have 512K RAMs and 17% have 256K memory. Of all of these, the majority were from Miracle Systems, one was from PCML, and another owner was uncertain who the manufacturer was.

24% of respondents have disk drives of one sort or another. Surprisingly 62% of disk drive owners have dual drives. Only 16% of drive owners do not use 5 1/4" drives. No one responded saying they had 3" although we did get responses from 3 1/2" owners. Regarding which manufacturer, Shugart had 36%, Teac 28%, MPI 7%, and 28% "did not know." Cumana was the best-selling disk interface at 69%. CST had a 15% share and Kempston and Delta split the remaining 16%.

The majority(89%) of respondents own printers. Of this total, 20% own Sinclair printers, 14% own Epson, 12% own Gemini, 10% own Brother, and 44% own "other"- Seikosha, C. Itoh, etc. People with a parallel printer held a slight edge(53%) over those who owned serial.

Concerning video display, only 3% were using a TV, 44% used a monochrome monitor, and 53% had RGB color displays. Of the RGB owners, 36% were using Sinclair brand monitors. The rest were fairly evenly divided (3-4% each) between Zenith, Magnavox, Panasonic, Radio Shack, Sears, Taxan, and Sony. Over 30% of respondents were clever enough to make their own cable.

Only 20% of respondents owned a modem. Of those, 64% owned the Avatex 300/1200 baud modem, 27% had Radio Shack, and 12% "didn't know." Approximately 39% were using 1200 baud. The majority (over 90%) had the Modapter.

Slightly over 75% of respondents had a ROM cartridge of one sort or another. Of those, 64% had I.C.E., 16% had TOOLKIT II, 9.5% had Metacomco's LATTICE C, 5% PASCAL, and the rest were varied(APL, MICE, etc.).

More than two-thirds of the respondents(67%) use their QL strictly for personal use. As to why they bought the computer, 32% liked Sinclair, another 32% liked the cost, 13% bought for the Psion programs, 9% for

the features, and the rest for various reasons.

Slightly less than half of the respondents(41%) use their QL on the average of one hour per day. 51% use it for two hours per day and the rest use it for "more than two hours." More than half(52%) use QLWP more than any other Psion program. 34% use QLDB, 14% QLSS, and no one said they use QLBG which is interesting. The least used program was none other than QLBG(62%) followed by QLSS(20%), QLDB(12%), and QLWP (6%). QLDB by far(74%) was felt to be the most difficult program to learn. Only 13% felt QLBG was, followed by 10% for QLSS, and 3% for QLWP. And, QLWP(70%) was felt to be the easiest to learn, with the other three Psion programs equally divided at 10% each as being the next easiest.

Your choices for best software, hardware, book, etc. were varied so we are going to mention only the top three winners in each category and dispense with straight percentages for the most part.

=====

Best Book: 1. SuperaBasic Handbook 2. Advanced User's Guide
3. Blueprint Series (Archive, Abacus, Quill, Easel)

Best Utility Program: 1. Cartridge Doctor 2. Toolkit II
3. I.C.E. and Supercharge (tied for 3rd)

Best Language Program: 1. Lattice C 2. Metacomco Assembler 3. Pascal

Best Graphics Program: 1. Peintre 2. GraphiQL 3. TechniQL

Best Game: 1. Psion Chess 2. Wanderer 3. Flight Simulator and
Karate (tied)

Worst Game: 1. Night Nurse 2. Lands of Havoc 3. Qlue

Most Useful Program: 1. QLWP 2. QLDB 3. QLSS and Assembler Workbench

Best Software House: 1. Psion and Talent 2. Digital Precision
3. Eidersoft

Best Programming Aide: 1. Toolkit II 2. Assembler Workbench
3. No clear winner

Program of the Year: There was no clear cut winner but COSMOS did receive more votes than any other. Others mentioned were FLIGHT SIMULATOR, I.C.E., NUCLEON, SUPERCHARGE, SUPER MEDIA MANAGER and others too numerous to mention.

Lemon of The Year: Again no clear cut winner but among those mentioned were QLUe, MACHINE CODE TUTOR, NIGHT NURSE, HOME ACCOUNTS, VROOM, ZAPPER, SCRABBLE, MAIL LIST, WD UTILITY, QSPELL, GRAPHIQL, and ASSEMBLER WORKBENCH.

Regarding future purchases, 20% said they intend to purchase disk drives, 16% said they were planning to buy a modem, 14% said they would buy another QL, a mouse and a monitor tied at 10%, 9% planned on purchasing a printer, and 6% said they would buy THOR, the new QL by CST/EIDERSOFT. The rest was divided between hard drives, memory, and a different computer.

When asked what new programs they would like to see, 26% wanted Desktop Publishing (we should have FRONT PAGE in for review by next issue), 18.5% wanted MS-DOS compatability, 14% wanted a "better" word processor, another 14% went for "U.S. business programs," and the rest was divided between I.C.E. compatible programs, PC Board designers, Xmodem, and statistical programs.

When asked to rate the dealers they regularly bought from, the majority were pleased at the service given when filling orders. In all dealer categories, including display of technical knowledge, stocking of new products, prompt replacement of defectives, and the others, U.S. dealers scored above 80% on the average.

QL owners by occupation broke down as follows: 15% were "professionals", ie. doctors, lawyers, professors, chemists, etc. 31% were in a technical profession such as programmer, electronics operator, consultant engineer, communication analyst. About 6% were students. Military personnel consisted of 6%. Retirees constituted 12% of the total. The remaining 30% had a wide variety of professions including locksmith, marketing rep, grocery store clerk, heating and oil service, security officer, self-employed, unemployed, and construction.

Almost one quarter, 24% of respondents belonged to QUANTA, the QL users group in England. A lot of you had never heard of the organization so we are printing an address here you can write to for more information. QUANTA publishes a monthly newsletter and has a huge library(over 400 programs) available for purchase by members at a very nominal fee. The address is:

Brian Pain, Secretary QUANTA
24, Oxford Street
Stony Stratford
Milton Keynes MK11 1JU
ENGLAND

You must join by writing England but U.S. members may purchase the library from Sub-librarian Tom Bent, 9016 Flicker Place, Colombia, MD 21045.

Nine percent belonged to a U.S. users group. 33% said they would buy a THOR if it was available.

It is a significant statistic that more TS1000 or ZX81 owners who may or may not also have bought a 2068, bought a QL. 76% who had the above bought a QL. 45% had 2068's. 16% had never owned a Sinclair computer before. If they owned another computer, Commodore or Radio Shack were the most common followed by TI99, IBM, Atari and Apple.

We hope you find this survey interesting. It seems, in summing up, that people who found Sinclair back in 1982-3 with the ZX81 are the ones who really like his computers. Hopefully, we will do a second survey next year and be able to see how the statistics change.

From all of us here we wish all of you a very Happy Holiday Season and hope 1987 brings you joy and prosperity. Until next month, enjoy your QL.